

Real Talk #027 – Asking about a product

Episode description

Calling customer service over the phone can be scary in a second language. In this episode, Andrew gives you key expressions to help you communicate over the phone when asking about a product.

Fun fact

Have you ever noticed that telephone numbers in American movies usually start with the number 555? That's because they don't want viewers to call a real telephone number. "Hello, is this Harry Potter?" "No! Stop calling this number!"

Expressions included in the study guide

- It's just me
- To break [something] down
- To get [one's] hands dirty
- No worries
- Best guess
- I was wondering if you



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hey there, everybody. My name is Andrew and you are listening to Real Talk by Culips.

Hey everyone, it's Andrew here and I'm all by myself today. **It's just me.** In today's episode of Real Talk, we're going to take a look at how to make a telephone call to a store to ask about a product. And you're going to get the opportunity to listen to a real call that I made when I called an electronic store to ask about the Apple AirPods, OK? I actually made this call a while ago, several months ago when the AirPods first came out and they were in really high demand and sold out everywhere. So I called around to several different stores to see if they were in stock anywhere. And, in the end, I couldn't find them. So I don't have any Apple AirPods.

So the plan for today is to take a listen to this telephone call and then **break it down**, take a closer look at the expressions and the language that was used by me and also the store employee during the call. Of course, I have removed all of the identifying information from the call. So, the store's name and location and the employee's name, I have removed this all from the audio so that I can protect their privacy. But, otherwise, it's a completely unedited call.

So let's take a listen to that call, but just before we do that, I wanna remind you that we have a study guide available for this episode on our website, Culips.com. So, by visiting Culips.com, you can download the study guide and it is chalk full of awesome things. You get a transcript, you get detailed explanations of the key vocabulary that we use in this episode, and you will get other bonus things like a quiz and prompts that you can use for writing or speaking practice. The study guide is great I highly recommend it and, if you would like to download it, simply visit our website, Culips.com.

All right, so let's **get our hands dirty** a little bit. Let's get into it. First, we'll listen to the call that I made to a local electronic store, and then we'll **break it down** bit by bit and take a look at what happened during that call. So here we go, the call in its entirety.

Employee: Hi, how can I help you?

Andrew: Hi, **I was wondering if you** had the Apple AirPods in stock right now?

Employee: No, we don't have any AirPods. We're all out.

Andrew: Ah, do you know when they'll be in?

Employee: I don't think so, but I'll double check. Give me a second.

Andrew: Sure.

Employee: Doesn't say when it will come but I'm guessing it will not come for next 3 weeks, for sure. From what I can see from my computer, yeah, it will not come for the next 3 weeks, for sure.

Andrew: OK. So a long time.

Employee: Yeah, a long time, yeah. Sorry about that.

Andrew: No problem. Thanks very much.

Employee: Yeah, **no worries**. Have a good night.

Andrew: Bye.

Employee: Bye.

Andrew: OK, so we just heard my call with the employee from a local electronic shop where I asked him about the availability of Apple's AirPod wireless ear buds, earphones. And as you heard in the call, they were out of stock at the store. And they wouldn't be getting any more AirPods in for a while, for at least 3 weeks according to the employee's **best guess**. So now let's go through that telephone call one more time and take a listen to it piece by piece to hear what I said and what the employee said, as well, and what kind of expressions we can use when we're talking on the phone to ask about a product.

Now the first thing you may have noticed is the employee isn't a native English speaker. I'm guessing from his accent that he's probably from somewhere in South Asia, but I can't be sure. And this actually brings up a really good point right from the very start here, and that point is that you're never going to be guaranteed to speak with a native speaker on the phone.

Andrew: Life in English-speaking countries is very multicultural, we have lots of immigrants, we have people from all over the world, and this means we have people that speak tons of different varieties of English. And that's just a fact of life and here we heard a non-native English speaker who I have to say did a great job on this call. He did a fantastic job, his English is very good.

OK, so let's listen again to the opening part of that phone call right now.

Employee: Hi, how can I help you?

Andrew: Hi, **I was wondering if you** had the Apple AirPods in stock right now?

Employee: Hi, how can I help you?

Andrew: Hi, **I was wondering if you** had the Apple AirPods in stock right now?

Andrew: In that clip, we heard the store employee answer the phone and say hi, how can I help you? And right off the bat, right from the start, I launched into my question: **I was wondering if you** had the Apple AirPods in stock? **I was wondering if you** had the Apple AirPods in stock?

And this is a great question structure to memorize. You can use it in all sorts of different situations. **I was wondering if you** blah, blah, blah. For example: **I was wondering if you** had a table for two available tonight? I'd like to make a reservation at your restaurant. **I was wondering if you** had a table for two available tonight? I'd like to make a reservation at your restaurant. Or another example: **I was wondering if you** had any promotions going on right now? **I was wondering if you** had any promotions going on right now? You know, like 2-for-1 pepperoni pizza or something?

So any time that you are making an inquiry about a product or about a service, you can use this question structure: **I was wondering if you** blah, blah, blah. Of course, the you here doesn't necessarily mean the person you're talking to on the phone, it means the store or the restaurant or the place that you are calling. That is what the you is referring to.

Moving right along, let's listen to the next section of that phone call.

Employee: No, we don't have any AirPods. We're all out.

Andrew: Ah, do you know when they'll be in?

Employee: No, we don't have any AirPods. We're all out.

Andrew: Ah, do you know when they'll be in?

Andrew: All right, there's two things there that I should comment on. The first one is the expression we're all out, we're all out. All out means zero in stock. So they have zero pairs of AirPods in the electronic store. They're all out. So when I heard this, I asked the employee do you know when they'll be in? Do you know when they'll be in? And this question is simply asking do you know when a new shipment of the AirPods will arrive in the store? OK? There's several ways that we could phrase this kind of question. Do you know when they'll be in? Or when will you be getting some in stock? When's the next shipment due to arrive? When will they be back in stock? All of these questions are totally acceptable to ask in this kind of situation.

All righty then, let's keep moving forward and listen to the next part of the conversation.

Employee: I don't think so, but I'll double check. Give me a second.

Andrew: Sure.

Employee: I don't think so, but I'll double check. Give me a second.

Andrew: Sure.

Andrew: There's not a ton of interesting things to note from that clip, but there's two things that I would like to touch upon. The first is double check, OK? The employee says let me double check. I'm gonna double check, double check. OK? And double check just means confirm, OK? So when he says that, you can hear him typing in the background, he is confirming when the next shipment of the Apple AirPods will arrive in the electronic store. Double check, double check. This is a very, very, very common expression in English. We use it all the time.

And the second interesting expression here is give me a second. Give me a second, just give me a second, OK? Give me a second means please wait a moment. Sometimes we even say give me a sec or give me a minute. So, give me a second, give me a sec, give me a minute, please wait. They all mean the same thing and they're all friendly and casual as well as polite expressions.

Andrew: Let's move on to the next section of the conversation.

Employee: Doesn't say when it will come but I'm guessing it will not come for next 3 weeks, for sure. From what I can see from my computer, yeah, it will not come for the next 3 weeks, for sure.

Andrew: OK. So a long time.

Employee: Yeah, a long time, yeah. Sorry about that.

Andrew: No problem. Thanks very much.

Employee: Yeah, **no worries**. Have a good night.

Andrew: Bye.

Employee: Bye.

Employee: Doesn't say when it will come but I'm guessing it will not come for next 3 weeks, for sure. From what I can see from my computer, yeah, it will not come for the next 3 weeks, for sure.

Andrew: OK. So a long time.

Employee: Yeah, a long time, yeah. Sorry about that.

Andrew: No problem. Thanks very much.

Employee: Yeah, **no worries**. Have a good night.

Andrew: Bye.

Employee: Bye.

Andrew: So in that final part of the conversation with the store employee, he just was again confirming, checking on the computer and letting me know that it's going to be a little while, at least 3 weeks by his estimation, before the AirPods will be arriving in the store.

A couple of quick notes here. Because he is talking about headphones, or ear buds, right, we have two ears, so we need two buds. And when we're talking about something that is plural, we should use the pronoun they instead of it. So he says I don't know when it will arrive. But if it was me speaking, I would probably say I don't know when they will arrive in stock.

Andrew: One last corrective note: he says for next 3 weeks, for next 3 weeks they won't be in stock. And here when we're talking about a specific period of time, we need to use a determiner the, OK? So, for the next 3 weeks they won't be in stock. For the next 3 weeks.

And, finally, when the call was wrapping up, I thanked him for his time and he replied in a really great way. I loved the expression that he used. He said **no worries, no worries**, OK? It's very causal, very friendly, and I use it all the time. So you may have heard no problem used often by native speakers when we say it's OK, you don't have to thank me. But another alternative that is very frequently used also is **no worries, no worries**. For example, hey, man, thank you for helping me with my homework. Hey, **no worries**. Or hey, thanks for lunch, it was delicious. **No worries**. We can use it like that, it's just that simple.

Well, everyone, that brings us to the end of today's episode. I certainly hope that you learned a lot. If you would like to ask us a question or get in contact with us, just send us an email. Our email address is contact@Culips.com. We're also all over the internet, on Instagram, on YouTube, on Facebook, on Twitter. So if you would like to find us on these social networking websites, just Google or search for Culips English podcast and you can't miss us.

Don't forget about the study guide that is available for this episode and, actually, we make study guides for all our episodes. If you visit Culips.com, you can sign up and become a Culips member and access the study guides for our entire episode library. It's an affordable and fun way to upgrade your English skills. So definitely check out all the information on Culips.com about becoming a Culips member and studying with our study guides.

That is it for me for now. I will be back soon, hopefully not alone next time, with another episode of the Culips English podcast. Talk to you then. Bye.

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Detailed Explanations

It's just me Idiom

It's just me is a common phrase to say you have come alone when other people probably expected you to come with someone else. Andrew usually hosts each episode with someone else, so he tells the listeners that this time, "**It's just me.**" You can also change the verb tense to say it was just me or it will be just me.

Here are a couple more examples with **it's just me**:

Fernando: Hello, everyone!

John: Hey, Fernando! Oh, is Jane coming?

Fernando: No, **it's just me**. Jane and I are taking a break.

John: Oh no, I'm so sorry to hear that.

Fernando: Don't worry about me. Hey, is that wine open?

Cassy: Hey, thanks for coming. Where are the others?

Ryan: Oh, **it's just me**.

Cassy: So it's just the two of us who are going to move my entire apartment? You said you would call more people.

Ryan: I did, but nobody wanted to come. Sorry.

To break [something] down

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew wants **to break down** the phone call he had with someone. **To break [something] down** is to take a close look at the individual parts. It's like taking apart the pieces of your desk or Lego building blocks. Once **you break something down**, you can look at all the smaller parts.

Here are a couple more examples with **to break [something] down**:

Darlene:	I absolutely love Picasso's Guernica.
Gary:	That's one of his really big ones, right?
Darlene:	Yeah. I studied it in depth at college.
Gary:	I don't understand it. Can you break it down for me?
Darlene:	Do you have free time for the next 10 hours? It might take a while!

Dave:	Hey, what are you doing?
Ben:	Just watching rugby. Do you like rugby?
Dave:	It's OK, I guess, but I haven't a clue as to the rules of the game.
Ben:	Do you want me to break it down for you?
Dave:	Sure. I'd like to know.

To get [one's] hands dirty

Idiom

To get [one's] hands dirty is to do a task in depth. Think of gardening. If you really want to dig deep and till the soil, you're going **to get your hands dirty**. It's the same thing for any other job, whether it is figuring out a problem at work or translating a message someone sent you.

Here are a couple more examples with **to get [one's] hands dirty**:

Ronan: Are you working on the profits report?

Yuko: Yes.

Ronan: Why? Can't you get one of your employees to take care of that?

Yuko: I could, but I like **to get my hands dirty**. I want to figure out exactly what's going on.

Ronan: Wow, you really like to micromanage.

Heather: There's a problem with my car. Can you hear that?

Ian: Yeah. You need to get that fixed.

Heather: Do you know a garage?

Ian: Actually, bring it over to my father's place.

Heather: I thought he retired.

Ian: He did, but he still likes **to get his hands dirty**. I'll give him a call.

No worries

Idiom

Near the end of Andrew's phone call, the employee says, "**No worries**." This is a very casual and friendly way of responding to a thank you. It's also a good response for when someone expresses regret toward you. In that way, it is interchangeable with the phrase don't worry. **No worries** is a nice way to speak to both strangers and friends.

Here are a couple more examples with **no worries**:

Fran:	Oh, thank you so much for finding my wallet!
Pat:	I found it sitting there, so I figured the only decent thing to do was to return it to its rightful owner.
Fran:	I know, I know, but seriously, thank you so much!
Pat:	No worries . Have a nice day!

Dana:	I'm sorry I had to cancel on you yesterday.
Fred:	Oh, no worries .
Dana:	Did you have a good time?
Fred:	Sure. I hope you can come next time.
Dana:	I hope you invite me! I'll be there.

Best guess

Idiom

Best guess is a phrase you can say when you are not quite sure of the answer but you are offering the best answer you can give.

Here are a couple more examples with **best guess**:

Aaron: Hello? I'm still driving to your house. The traffic is bad.

Sasha: OK, I'll be waiting for you.

Aaron: I'm really sorry.

Sasha: Sure. What's your **best guess** for how much longer?

Aaron: Probably about 20 minutes.

Sasha: Cool. See you later.

Victoria: I'm so angry. I dropped my phone and the screen broke.

Quentin: That's no fun at all. Are you going to get a new one or fix this one?

Victoria: I don't know. What's more expensive?

Quentin: I'm not sure, but my **best guess** is that simply fixing the screen on your old phone is less expensive than buying a brand new phone.

Victoria: All right, I'll look into that.

I was wondering if you

Phrase

In this episode, Andrew suggests that listeners should remember this structure, **I was wondering if you**. It's a very polite way of making a request.

Here are a couple more examples with **I was wondering if you**:

Jiao:	Hey, are you going anywhere special this weekend?
Sandra:	Actually, no. Just thinking of staying at home.
Jiao:	Really? I was wondering if you could come over and feed my dog.
Sandra:	Both Saturday and Sunday?
Jiao:	Yes. If you don't mind.
Sandra:	No problem. I love your dog!

Customer:	Excuse me?
Clerk:	Yes?
Customer:	I was wondering if you had this shirt in blue.
Clerk:	Let me check. It might take a moment because I have to go in the back.
Customer:	That's OK. I'll wait.

Quiz

1. In this episode, what is Andrew specifically requesting?

- a) he wants to buy AirPods
- b) he wants to know the price of AirPods
- c) he wants to know if they have AirPods in stock
- d) he wants to be put on a waiting list for AirPods

2. What is not a common variation of give me a second?

- a) let me second check
- b) give me a sec
- c) one second, please
- d) please give me a moment

3. True or false? To break something down, you need to physically break something.

- a) true
- b) false

4. How long does the employee think the AirPods will be out of stock?

- a) they're in stock right now
- b) 1 week
- c) 3 weeks
- d) 2 months from now

5. What is something Andrew did not remove from the audio recording?

- a) the store name
- b) the store location
- c) the employee's name
- d) the internet address

Writing or Discussion Questions:

1. Do you prefer going into a store and asking employees questions in person or do you prefer calling on the phone? Why?
2. Some people like to break things down. They like to explain subjects they know very well. Are you one of those people? How do you react when people explain every detail of a particular topic?
3. Do you like to get your hands dirty? What kind of activity do you really like to get deeply involved in?
4. No worries, no worries. Are you a worrier? How would you describe yourself: the easygoing type or the worrying type?
5. In your native language, how do you ask for favours? In this episode, Andrew mentions how the phrase I was wondering if you is a great way to request something. What is the equivalent in your language?

Quiz Answers

1.c 2.a 3.b 4.c 5.d

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